



# Come and See!

Week of January 5, 2025

## The Word ...

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, ... See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, ... Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses  
*(Is 60:1-6).*

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, ...

Behold, the star they had seen at its rising preceded them... They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother  
*(Mt 2:1-12).*

## Pondering the Word ...

Today we celebrate Epiphany. This commemoration, along with Pentecost, are my two favorite religious feast days: Epiphany encourages us to pay attention to the signs of the Incarnation, and Pentecost empowers us to take the Incarnation and make it real in our lives.

I have started using Epiphany to consider where the Spirit might be leading me this calendar year, both in my own life and in the words I am given to share in these reflections. A few inspirations came to my heart: Simplicity is one that arises every year around this time because, frankly, the Christmas season never seems to be simple for me! But two other words emerged from today's readings that I hope to carry through our musings: Courage and Community.

In the first reading, a personified Jerusalem is encouraged to raise her eyes, to look beyond the darkness that covers the earth, to see her children coming together again. It takes courage, both individually and as a community, to rekindle hope, to trust we won't be wounded again. In the gospel, we hear the story of the three foreign seekers willing to traverse great distances, to take great risks to follow a star. They relied on each other (and likely on their community back home) for the courage and strength to realize their dream.

## Living the Word ...

In Ephesians today, we hear of "the stewardship of God's grace." It takes courage to accept and nurture God-given graces to "follow the star" of hope and faith amid dark clouds of violence and hatred. What graces has God given you to steward? How are you called to nurture and grow these graces this year? Have you considered finding courage in community by joining other stewards committed to taking a risk and making the Incarnation real in our world? Use this "Feast of Paying Attention" to consider your hopes for the New Year. Look for the Spirit's signs. Follow your star.

## Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

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**Mon, Jan 6:** *Jesus began to preach: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:12-17, 23-25).* And so, we begin... "Incarnation: The Sequel." Jesus leaves the comfort and safety of his home in Nazareth to move to the bustling seaport of Capernaum. He immediately recruits the first four guys who will establish his community, the disciples who despite their egos and faults will do their best to support him—at least until the risks get to be too much. **Provision: "Bear With-ness."** This is the chapter title from the wonderful book, *The Amen Effect*, by Rabbi Sharon Brous. It is all about our theme this year of courage in community. At its essence, the book is about showing up for and staying with others—I highly recommend it. So, as the Incarnation unfolds in your world, how will you "bear with-ness" to the living God?

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**Tue, Jan 7:** *When Jesus saw the vast crowd ... they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mk 6:34-44).* Two other shepherd/sheep images come to mind: Shepherds watching and protecting their flocks by night. Maybe the Jewish elders think by keeping the fragile status quo with Rome, they are being good shepherds. But what Jesus sees is not one "lost sheep," but thousands! **Provision: Do you have the courage to be a shepherd?** Jesus is tough on the elders because those in leadership positions can lose sight of what is happening at the grassroots level. But shepherds don't have to wear clerical collars or miters on their heads. We are all called in some way to listen and be present to those we serve, to be aware of *their* needs. Who will you shepherd today?

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**Wed, Jan 8:** *"God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in them" (1 Jn 4:11-18).*

I have a confession to make. This quote is my creed, and if I had my way, it would be the creed for all the monotheistic religions. We could even modify it for non-deists and -theists. Everyone could then have their beliefs and thoughts about how this Love is manifest in the world; they could have their own rituals and prayer practices, but the differences would not interfere with this one basic concept: Love. **Provision: What's your definition of Love?** If you don't really know, here are two websites: <https://www.dictionary.com/e/greek-words-for-love/> and <https://coffeewithstarla.com/9-hebrew-words-for-love/>. Now, I'm a realist. I know people have different definitions and we will wind up fighting about whose definition wins! But perhaps the more we understand what love means to ourselves and to others in our families and communities, we might start building bridges instead of walls. Have the courage to engage others to learn more about this God called Love.

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**Thu, Jan 9:** *If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar (1 Jn 4:19-5:4).* I have led a charmed life and have no reason to hate, so I can't be glib about John's words today. For people who have suffered abuse either at the hand of another or of a race, nation, or religion, hate can become all-consuming. But still, my inclination is to ask what people don't get about this statement. It's very clear: you cannot love God unless you love others. **Provision: Banish hate from your heart.** Love and hate cannot co-exist. Recall the indigenous tale about the two wolves that exist in every human heart: Love and Hate. The one who wins is the one you feed. Banishing hate from your heart is a gift you give yourself.

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**Fri, Jan 10:** *There was a man full of leprosy ...when he saw Jesus, he fell prostrate and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean" (Lk 5:12-16).* I read an article recently about the outbreak of mpox in Africa. The extent of the suffering is staggering. But it is not just those with horrible communicable diseases we ostracize. **Provision: Who are the "lepers" you avoid?** This is tough. We might not even be aware, but most of us have some "type" of people we avoid or those for whom we feel no compassion. Ask Jesus to open your heart to mercy.

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**Sat, Jan 11:** *"We have this confidence in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1Jn 5:14-21).* "He must increase; I must decrease" (Jn 3:22-30). My will must decrease, God's must increase. It takes courage to put aside my own agenda to defer to God's plans. It takes wisdom to accept that my intentions, as admirable as they may be, are not necessarily aligned with God's eternal vision. **Provision: Decrease.** What needs to decrease in your life so that God can increase? For me, it's busyness brought on by too much stuff (that simplicity thing again!) and too many commitments. In Ignatian Spirituality, there's a concept called the Magis (Mah-jis), which translates "the more." But here, the "more" means the "better," as in what Jesus says to Martha about Mary choosing "the better part" (Lk 10:42). Each evening, when you look ahead to the next day, see if there is anything you can decrease so you can spend more time at Jesus' feet.